

F R E E
AND
C A N D I D
R E M A R K S

UPON THE REVEREND
MR. MOTTERSHEAD'S DISCOURSE,
OF
BAPTIZING SICK AND DYING INFANTS.

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

John i. 17.

Who hath abolished death; and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

2 Tim. i. 10.

BY THE AUTHOR OF PAEDO-BAPTISM,
IN TWO PARTS.

GLASGOW:

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F R E E
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C A N D I D
R E M A R K S, &c.

THE discourse of *Baptizing sick and dying infants*, lately published, is now before me, together with the *Advertisement* prefixed to it; and I will endeavour to keep them both in view, so as to consider the *reasoning* of the one, without offending against the *rules* of the other. For, the regard, which is justly due to the worthy Author from all, that have the honour of his friendship, or the happiness of his acquaintance, would make a modest pen blush; if any expression should drop from it in the least disrespectful to so amiable a character. But inviolably sacred are the rights of truth,

which must not be *sacrificed* even to the *Graces*,
 “Great is truth, and will prevail.” And let her prevail, on whatever side of the question she may declare herself at last.

THE point to be discussed with freedom and candor is this, viz. “Whether the baptizing of sick and
 “dying infants, is a thing improper, and a practice not
 “fit to be countenanced, or encouraged by wise and
 “rational Christians.” Now, there is a previous question to be resolved, and the resolution of which, I conceive, will greatly contribute to determine the point in debate; namely, whether the *baptizing of infants* is agreeable to the original institution and administration of baptism in the Christian church; yea, or no? If no; then the baptizing of infants *in health* must be as improper, as baptizing *sick and dying infants*. If yea; which is a ruled case between us†; then health and sickness appear to be out of the question; as no such *distinction* is made, nor, I think, necessarily *implied* in the institution of baptism. I say, *in the institution of baptism*. For a command to *baptize* is one thing; and a command to *teach* is another. These are two

† See pag. 322, — 326. of our Author.

different and distinct commands, tho' our Author seems to have confounded them together. Indeed his whole argument apparently proceeds upon a wrong construction of the *commission*†, where the word, *Discipling*, comprehends both *baptizing* and *teaching*. So that a larger and more complex idea belongs to this scripture-term, than is expressed in our language by the word, *Disciple*, which *simply* means a *learner*. But, for want of attending to this distinction, our Author makes no proper difference between baptizing and teaching, as he refers both to the business of instruction: tho' baptizing is one thing, and teaching is another; according as they are distinguished in the express words of the *commission*. And if the ordinance of baptism hath another meaning and signification, than what he hath assigned it, it may answer some valuable end, when applied to subjects incapable of instruction, yea even to sick and dying infants.

BUT, says our Author†, "it must appear from this account of infant-baptism, &c. that it goes on *supposition*, that the children we baptize *shall live*," &c. To which I answer; if his own account of infant-

† Matth. xxviii. 19, 20.

† Pag. 327.

baptism goes on this supposition; I suspect his account of it to be wrong, proceeding from the mistake already pointed out, and not preserving the ideas of *baptizing* and *teaching* properly distinct. For, if a command to *teach*, goes on supposition that the children we baptize shall live to a teachable age; it follows not that a command to *baptize* goes on the same supposition. These are two different and distinct commands; as was observed before: and, as to the time of their execution in ordinary, they may relate to different *subjects* in point of age. So far as children are concerned in the case, the two commands may be naturally understood thus; “*Baptize* infants, and, when “they are come to a proper age, *teach*, or instruct “them.”---As to the observation†, “That Christ directs to make, or admit disciples to him, *baptizing* “them; and then it immediately follows, *teaching* “them,” &c. this observation, I say, is of little force, in my humble opinion. For, if *teaching* immediately follows baptizing in the *order of words*; does it therefore immediately follow in the prescribed *order of time* as to the administration? How then will our Author justify his own practice in baptizing some infants, viz.

† Pag. 324.

those in health ; when such infants, supposing them to live, are incapable of instruction for a number of years after their baptism ?

WE are told†, “ Baptism in this case, that is, to
“ dying children, can answer no important end ; but
“ as to them it must be an insignificant and useless ceremony ; and therefore I judge it proper to be omitted.” Now, here, allowing our Author free liberty to judge for himself, which every man hath right to do ; we shall only examine the *grounds* of his judgment upon the case in hand. And it is obvious enough to remark, that if baptism given to dying children is, as he says, an useless ceremony as to them ; it follows not, that it can answer no important end at all. And if any good end may be answered thereby ; why should any one judge it proper to be omitted in this case ? Baptism may answer several good ends and purposes : and if all those ends cannot be answered in any particular case ; this is no sufficient ground for omitting it in that case. For, ’tis presumed, the chief end of *John’s* baptism, which was the *baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*†, was not answered in his baptizing of *Jesus*.

† Pag. 328.

† Mark i. 4.

And this might be the reason of *John's* scrupling to baptize him; till *Jesus* over-ruled his scruples, and said†, *Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.* And thus, by his own example, he hath taught us to reverence a divine institution, even in cases where the primary end of it cannot be answered; nor, perhaps, any other end, but only paying a religious regard to a divine appointment. For, I suppose, *casuistical* divines are agreed, that, when a thing is necessary upon no other account, it may be so, *necessitate praecepti*, i. e. by virtue of the precept enjoining it; a rule, which must take place in positive duties, if any where at all,

THIS leads us to observe, that, as *positive* commands are of a more arbitrary nature than *moral* precepts, we may be no competent judges of their fitness and propriety: a point which must be referred to supreme and sovereign wisdom. And so we can safely dispense with them in no case at our own discretion, or without a divine warrant. A divine warrant we have for dispensing with them in one case, and it may be in no other; I mean, when they interfere with any moral

† Matth. iii. 15.

duty. For, God *will have mercy, and not sacrifice*†. Upon this principle it was, that our Saviour excused his disciples, for *plucking the ears of corn, and eating it on the Sabbath day*, when they were hungry: and also justified *David and his men* for *eating the shew-bread* under the same necessity, &c†. This latter instance is produced by our Author§, as an argument for omitting the baptism of sick and dying infants. Very unexpectedly indeed! For, the case of necessity used by antient Christians to be urged the contrary way; as we shall have occasion to remark hereafter. It was here, I think, his business to have shewn, with what *moral* duty the baptizing of such children interferes.

THE argument from *laying aside circumcision in the Wilderness*, as he hath stated it, answers itself. For, he supposes it was so long omitted only, “because it” was *inconvenient* in that unsettled state of the people.†† Very well: but what inconvenience is there in baptizing sick and dying infants? unless, perhaps, when a minister’s health may be endangered by his being unseasonably called upon to perform that office. A

† Matth. xii. 7.

§ Pag. 329.

‡ Ibid. ver. 1.—4.

†† Ibid.

case which sometimes may, but seldom does happen; if I may judge by my own experience. And to make an occasional, accidental inconvenience, the ground of a general rule of practice, will hardly be thought good *casuistry* by any proper judges, in religion or law. With respect to the *Israelites*, it does not appear, that they omitted the circumcising of their children in the Wilderness, because they were *sick and dying*. It might therefore have been a little more to his purpose, if our Author had observed, that, though the time of circumcision was fixed to the eighth day, by a positive divine command; yet “it is the custom of the Jews, if their children are sick, to defer circumcising them till they are well again.” This would furnish a plausible plea for deferring the baptism of infants in the same circumstances; if baptism was as painful and dangerous a rite as circumcision is: but as this cannot be pretended, there is no foundation for arguing from the one case to the other. Besides, “if the Jewish infants die without circumcision; they *circumcise*, and *give them a name*, tho’ without *praying* over them, after death, and before their burial, at the time and place of interment†.” But, as there is no such custom among us Christians, of

† Vid. J. Buxtorf. Synag. Jud. cap. ii.

baptizing children after they are dead, to supply the want of baptism in their life-time; we have the less pretence for drawing the example of the Jews into a precedent, to countenance the omission of baptism in the case of sick and dying infants.

WHAT relation there is between baptism and the *brazen serpent*, another instance alledged †; or how an argument can be drawn from the one to the other, is not easy for a common eye to discern. However, as our Author hath formed his argument, it concludes nothing in his favour. For baptism is presumed to be a standing ordinance in the Christian church, where it is to continue in force thro' all ages. But the use of the brazen serpent was only temporary and transient, being confined to the *Wilderness*, where the *Israelites* were bitten with fiery serpents, as a miraculous antidote against that grievous plague. To this period of its usefulness alone, as acknowledging no other, Christ himself referred, when he said, *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the Wilderness, &c.* Therefore, tho' the brazen serpent was afterwards preserved as a kind of mo-

† Vid. J. Bunter's Synag. Jud. cap. ii. p. 329.
§ John iii. 14.

nument, its proper use was manifestly at an end long before the time when *Hezekiah* destroyed it, together with the *high places, images, and groves*, which the children of Israel used for superstitious purposes†. Consequently this pious king, tho' he exerted a *commendable zeal*, he did not dispense with any *divine ordinance*, by that public act of reformation. How then can his example be fairly alledged, as a proper warrant for dispensing with the ordinance of baptism in any case, particularly in the case of sick and dying infants? Or, with what propriety and decorum can this case be compared to the other, directly or indirectly, as a similar instance of laudable zeal in the sacred cause of religion?

But since our Author hath thought proper to introduce the brazen serpent upon this occasion, tho' foreign to his purpose, we shall pursue the hint a little further, before we dismiss it. And if baptism is considered as a *sign*, and token of covenant-grace; or “ of an interest “ in the blessings of the gospel, freely bestowed upon us “ in Christ Jesus;” which appears to be its primary notion, and principal end‡? I say, if Christian baptism

† See Numb. xxi. 8, 9. 2 Kings 18. 4.

‡ See Dr. Taylor, *On the Covenant of Grace, and Baptism the token of it.*

is viewed in this light; one may, perhaps, upon a nearer inspection discover some similitude and resemblance between it, and the brazen serpent, according to the account given of the latter by an antient *Jewish* writer. Speaking of the *Israelites*, that were stung with fiery serpents, as mentioned before, he says†, “ They were troubled for a small season, that they might be admonished, having a *sign of salvation* to put them in remembrance of the commandment of thy law. For he, that turned himself towards it, *was not saved by the thing that he saw, but by thee that art the Saviour of all.*” And if this account is, as it seems to be, just and proper; then these *Israelites*, who looked upon the brazen serpent, not only as the *sign of salvation*, but also as the *efficient cause* of their cure, were guilty of as great a mistake, as any Christian parents can commit, in supposing that baptism is more than a *sign of salvation*, and that it actually saves their children. The two cases appear to be parallel. Let us then suppose (what is very possible; and therefore we may be fairly allowed to make the supposition) that some of the *Israelites* were in fact guilty of that very mistake; I ask, would their mistaken notion of the

† Wisdom of Sol. chap. xvi. 6, 7.

thing, without a divine commission, have justified *Moses* in *taking down* the brazen serpent, which he had *set up* by a divine command? If not (which I think must be granted) then by parity of reason the like mistake, concerning the use and efficacy of baptism, can authorize no persons to dispense with this divine ordinance in the case under consideration.

THE real truth of the matter, in short, is *this*, that if the *abuse* of any thing is a good argument against the *use* of it; the argument will prove too much, and conclude too far. It will conclude against baptizing, not only sick and dying infants, but any infants at all. It will conclude against the celebration of the other Christian sacrament. Nay, what will it not conclude against, both in religion and common life? For, there is scarce any thing, that can be named, but what may be abused, and by many persons actually is abused, and perverted to a wrong purpose. But is there no mean between the two opposite extremes? Is there no method for prudent and pious men to guard against the superstitious use of a sacred ordinance, without laying it wholly aside in any case? Surely there is, viz. by rectifying vulgar mistakes about it, and giving people right

conceptions and rational notions of the true nature and design of the thing.

BUT we are asked†, “ With reference to the parents of these dying children, pray of what great use can the baptizing of their children be to them, when their children are dead ? ” Which question may be answered by another, viz. “ Of what use to parents is the baptizing of their children *in health*, when they die in infancy ? as a multitude of children do after they are baptized, tho’ they appeared in perfect health at the time of their baptism.” I say not this by way of objection against baptizing them. For I can easily conceive, that those religious acts, which the parents perform at their childrens baptism, may be of some use and service to themselves, whether their children live or die. And I desire to know, what it is, that Christians do at the baptism of their children *in health*; but what they may also do at the baptism of their sick and (for aught they know to the contrary; tho’ they cannot be sure of it: for, *while there is life there is hope*) dying infants. “ In that service, as our Author observes‡, parents profession of Christianity

† Pag. 330.

‡ P. 326.

" is solemnly renewed, pious promises are made by
" them to discharge all parental duties to their children
" with fidelity," &c. Now, all this is very good: but
then, (1.) I seriously ask, why cannot *parents profession of Christianity be solemnly renewed* at the baptism
of sick and dying infants? v. g. Is there any impropriety in making an open profession of their faith in God,
and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and a life to come,
upon that occasion? (2.) Upon the same occasion, why
cannot *pious promises be made by them to discharge all parental duties to their children with fidelity?* that
is, all parental duties *in their power*; all that present
circumstances may require, (and there are duties owing
even to sick and dying children) or that future circumstances may admit. And parents can promise no more
with respect to their children in health. Besides, are
these baptismal promises *absolute* or *conditional*? Conditional promises they must be; for, it is only upon condition that both themselves and their children *shall live*,
that parents promise to discharge the duties, which our
Author supposes them to engage for at their childrens
baptisms. And pray, why cannot parents promise to
discharge the same duties *conditionally* with reference
to their children in sick, and possibly in dying circum-

stances? that is, upon condition their children shall recover, and live. While there is life, there is hope; as I said before. And there may be as much ground to hope, that a sick, and at present seemingly dying infant shall recover; as that another infant, baptized in health, shall not be sick and die before the limited time for receiving Christian instruction. Therefore the same conditional promises may as consistently be made at the baptism of the one as of the other. And in both cases the parents equally express a pious disposition to perform all practicable duties to their children respectively. A disposition which must be pleasing and acceptable to the universal Parent: and therefore such a solemn declaration of it, as is made at their childrens baptism, can be no superstition, but a proper and becoming act of religion.

If we take a nearer view of our Author's way of reasoning, and examine his argument to the bottom; I believe it will be found to look with as unfavourable an aspect upon his own practice, as upon that which he censures and opposes. For, in arguing against the baptism of sick and dying infants, he proceeds all along upon *this* principle, viz. that it is *im-*

proper to baptize any infants, but those who *shall live* †; that is, to a proper age for receiving instruction, and enjoying the benefit of a *Christian education*. And what is the necessary consequence of this position: but that in order to know, what infants it is proper to baptize; 'tis absolutely requisite that we know, in the first place, what infants shall live to such an age? But, as it is utterly impossible to know this afore-hand in the case of any one infant whatsoever, without a revelation from heaven; therefore, by his *account of baptism*, the baptizing of any infants *properly* becomes an impracticable thing. For the infant, that is well and in health the *first* month, may sicken and die the second, or the third, &c. and so its present state of health is no ground of certainty at all, that the child shall live to the age assigned; as common experience shews. Considering then how many children actually die, before they come to years of discretion, and are capable of receiving Christian instruction; who, but a visionary enthusiast, can have the assurance to say, when he takes a child of a month old, or under, in his arms to baptize it, *I believe* this child *shall live* to those years? (For this is not the age of inspiration; and

† Pag. 327.

therefore no person in our days can pretend to Zacharias' gift of prophecy†.) And if no minister can rationally say that he *believes* it; how can he believe it *proper* to baptize such a child, according to our Author's hypothesis? And, if he does not really believe it *proper* to baptize the child; how can he honestly, and consistently do it? *Happy is the man that condemneth not himself in that thing, which he alloweth*: but we are told by the same inspired writer, *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin*‡; an approved maxim. Leaving then our Author to reconcile his main principle with his own practice of baptizing children in *health*, tho' he refuses to baptize *sick* and *dying* infants; I proceed to another observation.

It is a matter of great importance in this argument, that the *doctrine* and design of *baptism* be rightly understood. But we have had occasion to remark before, that our Author hath given an improper and imperfect account of baptism, by referring it wholly to the business of *instruction*, or education of children; which, at the most, can be only “a secondary end, resulting “from the principal, which appears to be this,

† Luke i. 67, 76.

‡ Rom. xiv. 22, 23.

“ that the ordinance is a *sign*, or token of the grace of “ the gospel-covenant.” For, what is the *principal character* sustained by Christ as *head of his church* ? Is it that of a *Master*, or *Teacher* ; and not rather, as I suppose, that of a *Mediator*, viz. of the *new covenant*† ? Baptism, then, *the rite of initiation in his church*, must of consequence have a chief reference to Christ under the *second* dignified character ; and so it naturally admits, yea requires a different notion, and answers a different end, (viz. as the token of the said covenant) from what would be proper and peculiar to the *first* character only. For any one therefore to limit the meaning, use, and design of Christian baptism to the *instruction of the subject* ; this must in all reason be thought an inaccurate account, which conveys an inadequate notion and idea of the institution. For, what ! is Jesus Christ a mere philosopher ? Is he not more properly a *Saviour* ? Yes, truly, a *princely Saviour* ‡ ; *the Saviour of the world* § , whom the *Father of mercies* hath exalted, and advanced to a *throne of grace*, placing him at the head of a dispensation of *grace*, as well as of *truth*.

† Heb. xii. 24. ‡ Acts v. 3. See Mr. Sam. Bourn's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 150, &c. § John iv. 42.

WHEN I said, that the ordinance of baptism is
“ a *sign*, or token,” (in other words, “ a memorial,
“ seal or assurance) of the grace of the gospel-cove-
“ nant ;” my meaning was, that it is so,” “ not only
“ to the infant, but also to parents, and to the whole
“ family. And therefore every Christian family, as
“ well as every Christian infant, have a right to the
“ administration of the ordinance, whether the child
“ be *sick*, or *in health* ; as being of the greatest use
“ and importance to revive in their breasts a sense of
“ redeeming love, and of their obligations. Certainly,
“ it is very fit and rational, that the covenant, or free
“ grant of pardon and eternal life, upon which our
“ whole life and being, all our comfort and happiness,
“ both here and hereafter do depend, should in every
“ family, at the birth of every child, be solemnly exhi-
“ bited and declared. This, doubtless, is the primary
“ design of baptism.----And, therefore, not only hath
“ the infant, newly entered into life a right, to the so-
“ lemn recognition of the divine grace, in which it hath
“ an interest ; but the whole family, parents and others,
“ have a claim to the administration of the ordinance
“ for their own benefit, to awaken their attention to
“ the riches of divine mercy in our redemption, to in-

“crease their gratitude and love, to excite them to
 “*walk worthy of their high calling of God, in Christ*
 “*Jesus*. And surely no minister can have a right to
 “deny, or discourage this claim, by refusing to admi-
 “nister the ordinance of baptism, whether the child be
 “sick or well†.”

LET US now proceed to take a further view of this gospel institution. Baptismal water aptly represents, tho’ it does not actually confer, the purifying from pollution, whether *natural*, or *moral*. By moral pollution I understand the *guilt* of sin, especially prevailing sin, which greatly defiles the *human soul*. And so, baptismal water may be conceived to represent symbolically the *pardon* of sin, thro’ the rich mercy of God in Christ, according to the gracious covenant sealed with his precious blood, which was *shed for the remission of sins*‡. But, because the guilt of prevailing sin cannot be removed, so long as sin does prevail, and is predominant; therefore *repentance*, and *remission of sins* are inseparably connected in the go-

† See this point explained, and urged at large by Dr. Taylor in the book before referred to, pag. 68, &c.

‡ See Matth. xxvi. 28. Acts xxii. 16, &c.

spel scheme†. But it may be said; what concern can innocent children be supposed to have with baptism, considered in this view? To which I answer, (1.) As they are born into a sinful world, where they are liable both to sin and sorrow; there seems to be no impropriety, but rather a certain congruity in applying to them the sacred sign of that gracious dispensation, under which they are born, and the token of the gospel-covenant; which includes the promise of divine *mercy and grace*‡. Is it not a comfortable circumstance, that new-born infants should appear by a positive divine appointment, to be received into the arms of divine mercy from their mother's womb? Besides, (2.) the innocent and holy *Jesus* would submit to the baptism of *John*, tho' it was the *baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*; as we took occasion to observe before. Again, by *natural pollution* I would here be understood to mean the *penalty* of sin, viz. *death*, which is so great a defilement, and even corruption of the *human body*. Speaking of man as mortal, holy *Job* says§, *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one; seeing his days are determined, &c.* q. d. "A mortal being can no more produce an immortal offspring, than clean wa-

† See Luke xxiv. 47. Acts ii. 38. v. 31. † Heb. iv. 16.

§ Job xiv. 4, 5.

“ter can be drawn from an unclean vessel, or spring.”
 This comparifon is agreeable to that antient divine law†, which ordained, that *whofoever toucheth---a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, fhall be unclean feven days*. For this reafon the Jews *whited* their *fe-pulchres*, being *full of dead mens bones, and all unclean-nefs‡*, to the end that people might avoid touching them. For, without fome fuch mark of diftinction, vifible and *remaining* upon them, the *graves appeared not*; and fo the *men*, that *walked over them*, were *not aware of them§*, whereby they inadvertently contracted legal pollution. In which, and the like cafes before fpecified, it was further enacted by the fame authority††, that the unclean perfon fhould *bathe himfelf in water*, as a mean of his purification. Hence we read of a man’s being *baptized*, or *wafhed*, after the touching of a *dead body‡‡*. All which things naturally fuggelt the notion, that death is a great pollution and defilement of the human body, rendering it an unclean thing. Now, this notion of pollution is pertinently applicable to all the

† Numb. xix. 16.

‡ See Matth. xxiii. 27. and Dr. Shaw’s Travels, pag. 285.

§ Luke ii. 44.

†† Numb. xix. 19.

‡‡ βαπτίζομενος ἀπὸ νεκροῦ. Ecclus. xxxiv. 25.

children of men, both young and old: because they are all mortal, and born to die. Therefore no less applicable to persons of every age is baptismal absolution in its own nature, as being a significant token of our final *redemption from death*, by Christ. As our Author himself allows, that infants have an interest in the redemption of Christ †; so we agree with him, that their baptism does not give them that interest; nor therefore can the want of baptism deprive them of it. But, tho' baptism does not give them a right to redemption; their right to redemption may justly intitle them to baptism, as an acknowledgment of that right. For, baptism, as applied to infants, seems to be an apt signification, and expressive sign of their redemption by Christ; in which view it appears to be very properly so applied. If then their being *liable* to sickness and death, by virtue of their relation to the *first Adam*, in whom *all die*‡, is a proper ground and reason of baptizing infants, in token of their relation to the *second Adam*, and of their being interested in the blessed and glorious hope of a resurrection to eternal life thro' him; is it not very strange, that their being in a *sick* and *dying* condition should be made an *objection* against baptizing

† Pag. 337.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

infants? Rather, one would imagine, it should be judged a good reason for baptizing them. For, how can the *sign of salvation* be more seasonably applied?

This may be a proper place to take notice, that besides the satisfaction of *fulfilling all righteousness* in their *measure*, after the example of our great Redeemer, mentioned before: I say, besides the secret satisfaction of paying due regard to a divine appointment; it may yield additional comfort to pious parents, and greatly assist them in the act of resignation, to resign up their sick and dying infants to God under the *covenant-sign* of baptism; by this solemn act at once recognizing both *his* right to dispose of them, and also *their* right to covenant- blessings. This gives the solicitous parents, as it were, ocular proof, and a sensible evidence of his own appointing, that their children *die under God's covenant of everlasting life*†. And thus, tho' they were fully convinced of their children's interest in the redemption of Christ before; yet the seeing them baptized, according to a divine appointment, is a proper mean to excite their own faith and hope into more vigorous and lively exercise; just as

† 2 Mac. vii. 36.

beholding the *rainbow in the cloud*, that antient sign of God's covenant†, had an apt tendency to strengthen the faith of the pious in the divine *promise* which it sealed; tho' that same promise was known and believed before. Therefore our Author may possibly be mistaken, when he says‡, "This resignation of them to the Divine disposal----is as perfectly, and, I doubt not, more acceptably done by prayer, without baptism, in the case before us." This, I say, may happen to prove a mistake. For, if prayer, which is not here excluded, but supposed always to attend baptism, is the proper and formal way; it is not a *motive* of resignation. But the solemn and divinely authorized recognizing of the *double right* aforesaid, in their childrens baptism, suggests to the mind of Christian parents at once those awful thoughts, and those pleasing reflections, which have an happy tendency to calm, compose and refresh their troubled and sorrowful spirits; when, with yearning bowels, they see their poor infants lie languishing before them in sick and dying circumstances. And, whatever some tempers may be able to bear; there are others, which require all the assistance, that can be procured for them,

† Gen. ix. 8, — 17.

‡ Page 344.

to perform a thorow act of resignation, in a case so affecting to the heart of a tender parent. On such mournful occasions it is but cold comfort, to direct a weeping eye to the dimmer light of nature for relief†, as our Author seems to do‡; tho' not exclusive of the scriptures. And, how he could think the case of the infants at *Niniveh* any thing to the purpose of his argument; I cannot comprehend§. For, that instance proves no more in favour of infants, than of cattle, which are also mentioned on the same occasion, as the care of Providence††. But to let this matter pass, and draw towards a conclusion:

I HAVE one observation more to make upon our Author's notion of baptizing only children in health; viz. that it is a great *innovation* in Christian discipline, and contrary to the judgment and practice of the primitive church. For, those few antient Christian writers, who advised the *delay* of childrens baptism *in*

† See Mr. *Hollet's* Discourse on the Impossibility of proving a future State by the Light of Nature; and the Defence of it, in answer to Mr. *Grove*.

‡ Pag. 334.

§ See Pag. 335.

†† Jonah iv. 2.

health, approved of their baptism, in case of *danger*, i. e. of death ; (quite the reverse of this new scheme in both articles,) viz. Tertullian and Gregory Nazianzen†. In this case, rather than children should die without baptism, the former of these writers allowed, that a *layman* should perform the office for them ; so far agreeing with our Author's concession to " Christian
 " parents, who cannot be satisfied to defer baptism,
 " when their children are dangerously sick‡," (tho' our great reformers seem to have been of another mind§. But the argument drawn from *circumcision*, to shew, that parents may baptize their own children, if they judge it necessary, in a *sick* and *dying condition*, will prove just as well, that they may baptize their own children *in health*. " For, *Abraham*, to
 " whose instance this Author appeals, circumcised his
 " son *Ishmael*, and all the males in his family, when
 " they were, for ought that appears, all in perfect
 " health." Whereas then he would persuade them††
 " to wait on Divine providence for their children's

† See Paedo-Baptism, second Part, p. 6.

‡ Pag. 332.

§ Vid. J. Calvini Epist. et Respons. fol. pag. 334, &c.

†† Pag. 331.

“ recovery,-----and not in a hurry send for the minister to baptize them,” &c. the truth is, as he hath stated the case, they need not send for the minister at all, to perform that office upon any occasion. But, by the way, why must they wait only for their childrens recovery? Why not longer than so by some years ; if the baptizing of children means no more than *putting them to school* ; as he seems to make it†. For, their recovery from one illness is no security at all, that they shall not be taken off by another, before they arrive at a teachable and learning age. But enough of this before.

AND now would I also advise *Christian parents* to wait on *divine Providence*----in all cases, and for all events : but to do it in the way of their duty, faithfully endeavouring to the best of their power, and so far as present circumstances admit, to *fulfil all righteousness*. And, thus, paying a decent respect to a divine institution in every instance, and as any occasion offers ; let them get their children baptized, either *in health*, or *out of health*, rather than not have them baptized at all. And I cannot but wish, that no Christian minister

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of any denomination would discourage in the mind of serious Christians a conscientious and pious regard to a solemn ordinance of God; and much less claim to themselves a dispensing power, without being able to produce a proper commission for it. For, as our Author himself hath well said upon another occasion†, “ to God an unreserved subjection and obedience is always due; his laws can never lose their force, but ought to be preserved sacred and inviolate: not only his moral laws, that are of unchangeable and eternal obligation, and consequently to them our first regards are due; but also his positive ones challenge a reverential and conscientious observance; they are prescribed by incontestable supreme authority: therefore we cannot neglect them, without being guilty of disowning the right of God to govern, and give us law. Yea, being the directions of infinite wisdom, in order to our confirmation, and growth in all moral excellencies; it will be both ingratitude and folly to disregard them. If, indeed, we are dutiful children, and faithful servants of God; we shall make it our continual endeavour, to walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless: for then only, shall

† Religious Discourses, p. 244, &c.

“ we have no cause to be ashamed, when we have respect unto all his commandments.” &c.

I HAVE now freely declared my own sentiments upon the point in question. And tho’ I should not be so happy, after all, as to *convince* my worthy and much esteemed friend, that his *sentiments* and *practice* are wrong; yet, having religiously conformed to the other terms of his *Advertisement*, I would hope these Remarks on his *Discourse* may *deserve*, and therefore *obtain* some *regard* from his known ingenuity and honour.

FINIS.

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